



E-Newsletter – July 2010

Welcome to the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders first e-newsletter! It has been an exciting past couple of months for the Initiative as we built up our staff (in time for a very busy Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month) and introduced our work through various events within the community and federal agencies. We look forward to using this forum as way to share timely announcements and keep you updated on our activities and the work of our federal partners. We welcome your input and feedback; please do not hesitate to contact us at WhiteHouseAAPI@ed.gov.

Activities Update

- **Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month** – in recognition of Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month, the Initiative launched a “*What You Should Know About Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders*” campaign within the federal government. The campaign aimed to raise the profile of the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community by increasing communication and access between federal agencies and AAPI communities. Throughout May, the Initiative partnered with the U.S. Departments of Labor, Housing and Urban Development, Health and Human Services, and Education, to host a series of roundtable discussions on housing, jobs, workers issues, health disparities and educational attainment. Community organizations shared innovative models of success and provided specific policy recommendations to federal agencies. Additionally, the Initiative enlisted Administration officials from across the executive branch to hold events and conduct local site visits across the country in an effort to broaden AAPI community engagement.



Dept. of Labor Secretary Hilda Solis hosts a roundtable with White House and community leaders on issues facing AAPI workers



Dept. of Education Secretary and Initiative Co-Chair Arne Duncan visits Quincy Elementary in Boston's Chinatown

Comment [AU1]: Need more pictures. Other roundtables?

- BP Gulf Oil Spill Response** - Following the BP Gulf oil spill, the Initiative received complaints regarding the lack of or inadequate language translation provided in the relief efforts. There are thousands of Southeast Asian Americans in the Gulf Coast region, which comprise one-third of the seafood industry workforce – commercial licensed fishers, oysterfolk, crabbers, shrimpers, boat welders and seafood processors – and provide the U.S. with one-third of its seafood. The BP oil spill's disruption of the seafood industry threatens the livelihoods of an estimated 80% of Southeast Asian American families in the region. The Initiative dispatched staff to Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama to assess the immediate needs among Southeast Asian Americans and provide recommendations to the federal agencies and Unified Area Command (UAC). Initial assessments revealed lack of information and coordination and problematic language access issues faced by Southeast Asian Americans and other seafood industry workers along the Gulf Coast, where there are higher concentrations of limited-English proficiency and low literacy levels (compounded by loss of income and livelihoods).

The Initiative advises and assists the Deepwater Integrated Services Team (DIST), an interagency working group headed by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, responsible for coordinating federal resources to those affected by the BP oil spill. The Initiative serves as co-lead of the DIST Language Accessibility Subgroup, which spearheaded the establishment of a **centralized Federal-wide system providing multiple language translations** for oil spill relief efforts in the UAC and distributing these materials to impacted communities.

Read about the Initiative's work and experiences in the Gulf region at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2010/06/17/impact-gulf-oil-spill-aapi-communities-0>



Bilingual town hall meeting with Vietnamese American fishers, their families and community leaders impacted by the oil spill in D'Iberville, MS



Bilingual Vessels of Opportunity safety training for Vietnamese Americans who will assist with the oil spill clean-up efforts, interpreted in Vietnamese in Chauvin, LA



Father Vien Nguyen of the Mary Queen of Vietnam Church, New Orleans East, introduces President Obama at the White House Reception celebrating AAPI Heritage Month, May 24, 2010

Upcoming Events

Comment [AU2]: Anything else?

- Secretary of Education Arne Duncan and Secretary of Commerce Gary Locke, co-chairs of the Initiative will convene the Interagency Working Group at an inaugural meeting on July 21, 2010 at the White House.

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